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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001945

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SUBJECT: ARAB LEAGUE ENVOY MOVES TO IZ FOR SECURITY

REF: BAGHDAD 1843

Classified By: Classified by Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Arab League (AL) Ambassador Mokhtar Lamani moved out of his house in the MFA compound on June 6 for the International Zone after reported security incidents. Lamani said he continued to plan for the June 20-22 reconciliation conference but conceded that no Arab Foreign Ministers had yet committed to attend. He said the final announcement on the date of the conference would be made during the visit of AL Assistant Secretary General Ahmed Benhelli who was to arrive in Baghdad on June 7. Lamani said he hoped to convince three Arab Foreign Ministers to visit Baghdad soon to show support for the new Iraqi government. End summary.

Lamani Flees to IZ for Security

¶2. (C) Arab League Ambassador Mokhtar Lamani told PolOff he had moved out of his house and office on June 6 under instructions from Cairo. Lamani met Poloff at the Rasheed hotel where he said he intended to stay for the duration of his assignment in Baghdad. Lamani said the abrupt move came a day after two attempts to gain access to his compound by armed men. The first group in two sedans arrived at 10 pm on June 5 and claimed that they had a meeting with Lamani. Later, a second group in two Toyota Land Cruisers sought entrance, claiming that they had been sent by PM Maliki. Both groups quickly left when Lamani's Peshmerga guards refused them entry. Lamani said he had earlier been warned by Cairo that Egyptian intelligence sources had learned he was the number one target for Al Qaeda in Iraq. Lamani said a large explosion near the MFA compound on June 6 convinced the Arab League that he must immediately move to the safety of the IZ.

Conference Plans and Date Still in Flux

¶3. (C) Lamani said he still hoped that the planned June 20-22 Reconciliation Conference in Baghdad would take place. He told Poloff that the Arab League secretariat had instructed him to change the June dates even before his May 31 visit to Najaf (reftel) but that he was still hoping that the conference could occur as scheduled. He conceded that no Foreign Ministers had yet confirmed attendance and acknowledged the scheduling conflict with the OIC ministerial in Baku. He repeated that many Arab Foreign Ministers fear coming to Baghdad for security reasons and would prefer another venue for the conference. He described his June 1 visit to Erbil to visit Kurdish leaders as very successful - KRG President Masud Barzani supported the conference but had not committed to attending. Lamani charged that Iraqi MFA

Undersecretary for Administration Sa'ad al-Hayani, whom he described as a Ba'thist, was causing trouble - pretending to be supportive of the conference but hampering progress behind the scenes.

¶4. (C) Lamani said an AL delegation headed by Assistant Secretary General Ahmed Benhelli would arrive in Baghdad on

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June 7 and seek "guarantees" from the Iraqi Government before making a final announcement on the dates of the reconciliation conference. Lamani said that AL SG Amr Moussa would contact the U.S. for similar guarantees that conference participants will not be arrested during the conference.

¶5. (C) Lamani said the conference agenda and intended outcomes are still in development. Lamani said he wanted a conference result that included a comprehensive list of problems and issues, a commitment from all of the parties to work to resolve the issues, and a statement on the mechanism for problem resolutions. He said he favored workshops rather than general sessions as the means of focusing the work of the delegates.

Meeting of Leaders' Sons Planned

¶6. (C) Lamani said his efforts to arrange a meeting between Ayatollah Sistani's son Mohammad Ridha and Harith al-Dhari's son were progressing. Lamani said he was working to organize a meeting outside of Iraq, perhaps in Cairo, and expected that Masud Barzani's son would also participate.

Possible Visit of AL Ministers to Baghdad

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¶7. (C) Lamani said he was trying to organize a short visit to Baghdad by three Arab Foreign Ministers to show support for the new Iraqi government. He hoped that he could get Foreign Ministers from North Africa, either Egypt or Jordan, and the Gulf to visit Iraq.

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